Transfer Credit Services for Work Completed Abroad on Non-affiliated Programs

Academics FAQs

This service is for currently enrolled UW-Madison undergraduate students who plan to complete course work abroad at a foreign institution or a study abroad program which is non-affiliated with UW-Madison. Not all non-affiliated programs are eligible for transfer credit. Before applying for a non-affiliated program, you should do your best to ensure that courses are similar in credit, contact hours, and content to a UW-Madison course.

1. Q: How do I know if my courses will transfer from the foreign institution or study abroad program?
A: Credit is awarded for college-level course work completed at U.S. institutions accredited by a regional or national accrediting organization recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Foreign institutions must be recognized by the Ministry of Education in that country. In order to receive transfer credit, the non-affiliated program must issue an official transcript from an accredited tertiary-level, degree-granting institution. If you are participating on a program through a study abroad provider (CIEE, CEA, IES, etc), you must obtain an official transcript from the provider’s “School of Record”. You may need to pay an additional fee for this transcript. You will need to confirm with the host institution or study abroad program that you will be provided with a transcript that meets these standards.

Note about China: Courses from English-language based programs in China will not be evaluated. These programs are often run in third-party collaboration with the campus hosting the program. Because they are not part of a university degree program, the courses may not be recognized by the Chinese Ministry of Education. UW-Madison will consider transfer credit only once a transcript is certified by the China Academic Degree and Graduate Education Development Center (CDGDC) and a course syllabus is submitted.

Note about two-year institutions: UW-Madison accepts up to 72 transferable credits from a two-year institution. If you have already transferred 72 credits from a two-year institution, you may not be eligible to receive additional degree credit.

Courses must be similar in nature, level, and content to a course in our undergraduate curriculum and be applicable to one of our academic programs. Continuing education courses, graduate-level courses, and courses that are remedial, technical, vocational, or doctrinal in nature are not transferable. Courses which are designed to provide experiences in the food, drink, or culture of a country are not transferable. For all courses you take abroad, save all syllabi, reading lists, exams, and papers in case you need them as part of the transfer credit services once you return to campus.

2. Q: I will be taking an internship, independent study, or field study course abroad. Will I receive transfer credit?
A: If you take an internship, field study, or independent study course abroad, you will need to petition for credit with the appropriate UW-Madison academic department once you return to campus; these courses cannot be pre-approved for transfer credit. Submit your detailed course description and summary of work completed with the instructor to the appropriate academic department. The academic department will notify IAP if transfer credit is recommended; final credit values will not be determined by the academic department. UW-Madison has a robust International Internship Program that students should explore for opportunities to obtain residency credit for an international internship.

3. Q: How do I know if a course will transfer?
A: UW-Madison degree requirements are specific to this institution and our academic programs. While many transfer courses will count as degree credits, you should not expect to satisfy more specific requirements. Discuss your plans with your Academic Advisor. To determine how a course will transfer, compare the course description(s) to UW–Madison’s course description(s) and prerequisites and ask yourself these questions:
   1. Breadth: What is the breadth of the course?
   2. Level: What is the level of the course? Is it at the introductory elementary level within a department or at a more advanced level?
   3. Prerequisites: Must you have attained a certain class standing (e.g., junior level) or completed certain courses before you can enroll in the course?
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4. Sequence: Is the course part of a yearlong sequence? If it is part of a sequence, it may cover only part of the comparable UW–Madison course, especially if it is offered at a quarter-system school. Avoid these courses at quarter schools.

5. Direct Equivalent: Does the course cover the content of a UW–Madison course? Is it offered at the same level with similar prerequisites? If so, the course may transfer as a direct equivalent.

6. Elective Credits: Is the course unlike any UW–Madison course, but similar in the type of content and level? If it is, it will likely transfer as elective credits in the appropriate department with a designated breadth and level (e.g., history electives with social studies breadth at the intermediate level).

4. Q: Can I submit courses for preliminary approval of transfer credit?
A: Once you have completed the sign-up process with IAP, you will have access to the preliminary Transfer Course Equivalent Request (TCER) online form. If you are able to locate specific information about the courses you will be taking abroad, such as a course description and/or syllabi, you may submit requests for preliminary TCERs. A maximum of 4 courses can be submitted for summer and 5 for each semester abroad. Depending on the duration you plan to be abroad, please be mindful of the deadlines to submit preliminary TCERs:

Summer programs: Requests will be reviewed between March 1 and May 15
Fall semester/Academic Year: Requests will be reviewed until August 1
Winter session: Requests will be reviewed between November 1 and December 1
Spring semester: Requests will be reviewed until December 1.

Incomplete requests will not be reviewed. You should have a response to your request within 3-4 weeks of submission. Course requests submitted after the above deadlines will not be reviewed by the Office of Admissions for transfer credit until IAP receives your official transcript.

5. Q: How do I convert my foreign credits to U.S. semester credits?
A: Your foreign credits/hours will be converted to U.S. semester credits. You should not assume that your foreign credits/hours will transfer at face value.

6. Q: How many credits can I receive for my coursework abroad?
A: If a school operates on semester hours, the same number of credits will be awarded as earned. If the school operates on quarter hours, UW-Madison will multiply the hours by two-thirds to convert credits earned to semester hours. Any other credit systems will be converted to semester hours. The total number of credits taken for summer study cannot exceed the total number of weeks the summer session lasts. For example, a student completing a six week summer session can earn only six credits during that session.

7. Q: Can I take a course abroad to fulfill the ethnic studies requirement?
A: No. The faculty instituted the ethnic studies requirement with the understanding that suitable courses would focus on minority populations within the United States.

8. Q: I want to take an intensive language program this summer, but it’s not at an accredited, degree-granting institution. Will I get credit?
A: You cannot receive transfer credit, but you may earn credit by departmental examination. If the language department is willing to do so, they may administer an evaluation to determine how many credits, if any, you may receive for your work abroad. Visit the College of Letters and Science Credit by Departmental Examination in the Undergraduate Catalog for more information.

9. Q: What final grade must I receive in order for the course to be transferrable?
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A: You must achieve a final grade of D (1.0 on a 4.0 scale) or better in order for the course to be eligible for transfer credit. Students in the College of Engineering must achieve a final grade of C (2.0 on a 4.0 scale) or better for the transfer credits to fulfill degree requirements.

10. Q: Can I take a course abroad to fulfill major requirements?
A: UW–Madison degree requirements are specific to this institution and our academic programs. While many transfer courses will satisfy general degree requirements, you should not expect to satisfy more specific degree requirements, especially in the areas below:

1. Math: Fulfilling GER Quantitative Reasoning Part A with a transfer course is often difficult. It is also difficult to find direct equivalents to UW–Madison calculus courses (211, 221, 222). UW-Madison recommends you avoid trying to fulfill either of these requirements with a transfer course. If you feel you must take a math course, compare the content of the transfer course with that of the UW–Madison course. UW-Madison Math course descriptions can be found online at https://www.math.wisc.edu/UCourses. To receive a direct UW–Madison equivalent, the transfer course must cover all the topics listed for the UW–Madison course. Otherwise, you will receive math electives that will not likely satisfy a particular math requirement.

2. Science: Receiving a direct equivalent for a UW–Madison science course can also be difficult. You are more likely to receive elective credits in a particular subject breadth area. It is not difficult to fulfill the physical or biological science breadth requirement as long as the transfer course covers content similar to UW–Madison's physical or biological science courses. Avoid a course offered as part of a sequence at a quarter system school; it will not be the equivalent of one of our semester courses.

3. Foreign Language: Make sure the transfer course is worth at least 4 semester credits and is part of a sequence of courses.

4. Liberal Arts (e.g., history, anthropology, psychology): If it is a college-level course, it will transfer as either elective credits or a direct equivalent.

5. General Education Requirements (GER): Do not expect to fulfill your GER off campus. The requirements are specific to UW–Madison and are difficult to complete at another institution, especially the Comm B requirement.

6. English: International students who must take English 118 to satisfy GER Comm Part A may not substitute other communication/English courses. Very few schools offer a course equivalent to our 118.

Make an appointment with your Academic Advisor if you are considering course work in your major or course work to satisfy GER. Upper-division courses and sequence courses in the science and math fields may not be acceptable for satisfying a major requirement. (L&S Students: Keep the major courses in residence requirement in mind.)

11. Q: As a nursing major, can I take courses abroad for transfer credit?
A: Generally, nursing professional course work taken away from UW-Madison does not transfer in to satisfy nursing degree requirements. The School of Nursing directly evaluates all equivalency requests for summer professional nursing course work. For more information, contact the Nursing Academic Dean, Cooper Hall 1100, 608-263-5166. Pre-nursing students and/or nursing students planning to take non-nursing course work abroad (e.g., non-nursing degree requirements, prerequisites, general education requirements), can use these services.